

cjm

update

Una Padel outlines recent criminal justice findings and developments.

Race and criminal justice

The annual statistics on race and the criminal justice system for 2002/3 have just been published. They show that:

- The number of racist incidents recorded by the police fell by 11% to 48525. 31034 racially aggravated offences were recorded (an increase on the previous year) and 8154 defendants were prosecuted for them.
- Of the 2604 homicides which were recorded in the three years ending in 2002/3, 10% were of black people, 6% Asian and 6% other ethnic minority groups. The number of Asian homicide victims was 9% higher than in the three year period ending 2001/2. Shooting killed 33% of the black victims, 10% of Asian victims and 6% of white victims. 27 homicides in this period were recorded as racially motivated.
- In June 2002 black and minority ethnic groups accounted for about 22% of the male prison population, and about 29% of the female prison population. These figures included foreign nationals who made up about 10% of the male and 20% of the female prison population.

Review of the S95 Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System, Home Office May 2004.

Ethnicity and victimisation

Analysis of the British Crime Surveys from 2001/2 and 2002/3 provides some interesting findings on ethnicity, victimisation and worry about crime. It shows that:

- People from black and ethnic minority groups were at greater risk of personal crime than white people, but not of household crime.
- People from black and ethnic minority groups were more at risk from mugging than white people.
- People of mixed race are at greater risk of crime than all other groups and this risk increased significantly between 2001/2 and 2002/3.
- People from black and ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to have high levels of worry about burglary, car crime and violence than white people. This was the case even when the type of area they lived in and their experience of

crime were allowed for. People of mixed race faced a higher risk of violence than Asian people, but Asian people were more likely to be worried about being a victim of violence.

Home Office Findings 237

Vulnerable and intimidated witnesses

Special measures to help vulnerable and intimidated witnesses feel safer are apparently working to reduce anxiety and distress. Screens, video-recorded evidence-in-chief, live TV links, clearing the public gallery of the court, removing wigs and gowns, allowing witnesses to use communication aids, video-recorded pre-trial, cross and re-examination and the use of intermediaries all became possible as a result of the *Youth and Criminal Evidence Act 1999*. Surveys found that a third of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses said they would not have been willing or able to give evidence without these special measures. Their satisfaction with the criminal justice system was higher if they had access to these measures.

Home Office Findings 240

Cognitive skills programmes in prison

An evaluation of cognitive skills programmes in prison looking at outcomes other than reconviction rates has found that both prisoners and staff reported short-term benefits in prisoner participation including improved prisoner behaviour, increased self-confidence, improved literacy skills and better interpersonal skills. They also said that cognitive skills training helped prepare prisoners for other offending behaviour programmes. Most of the prisoners who had completed a cognitive skills programme said they would have liked to have started cognitive skills training at an earlier stage in their prison sentence so that they could practise their newly acquired skills before release from prison.

Home Office Findings 242

Justice awards

A new award scheme, the Justice Awards, is being launched this summer and the first awards are to be presented in October. There are nine categories encompassing work undertaken by the statutory and voluntary sectors with victims, witnesses and offenders. If you would like to nominate a colleague please look on the Justice Awards website for further information, www.cjsonline.gov.uk/justiceawards